My great grandfather’s early life mirrored that of Jack London. Born in San Francisco to a seamstress whose husband abandoned her, my relative Edgar Rayner moved as a small boy to the more hospitable climate and open space of Oakland. There, family legend says, he helped the slightly older Jack London with one of his paper routes – working for candy.

To test the veracity of this tale I pulled Jack London: An American Life off the shelf and was quickly swept away by the author’s style and telling of London’s remarkable, but short life.

The author, Earle Labor, is the curator of the Jack London Museum in Shreveport, Louisiana and a Wilson Professor of American Literature.
THIS MONTH AT THE MECHANICS’ INSTITUTE

AUTHORS, LECTURES, & MORE

Attend these intimate and up close author programs and engage directly with local, national, and internationally known writers talking about their newly released books. - LAURA SHEPPARD, EVENTS DIRECTOR

JANUARY 2014 PREVIEW

Wednesday, January 15, 6:00 pm
The Roy Stories (Seven Stories Press)
BARRY GIFFORD
In conversation with Peter Maravelis, Program Director, City Lights Books & Publishing
For forty years, The Roy Stories have been the one continuous unbroken line in the otherwise kaleidoscopic career of one of America’s greatest living writers. Spanning time and space—the Southern and Midwestern United States from the 1940s through the 1980s—The Roy Stories chronicle the personal history of Gifford from Chicago to Miami in a Hemingway-style Nick Adams story. Emotional, exploratory, and brimming with photographic realism, these stories defy the parameters of memoir or autobiography.

Poet, novelist and master of the short story, Barry Gifford, is best known for Wild at Heart, Sailor & Lula: The Complete Novels, Sad Stories of the Death of Kings, and Memories from a Sinking Ship: A Novel and Landscape with Traveler. He has published over forty works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, which have been translated into twenty-eight languages. Members Free; Public $15

Wednesday, January 22, 6:00 pm – Performance and photography from the book!
The Day of the Locust by Nathanael West (Limited edition - Arion Press)
Photography by Lucy Gray
Introduction by David Thomson
Photographer Lucy Gray has re-imagined this American literary classic about the shams of Hollywood and the motion-picture industry with her striking noir-esque photos for this fine art edition by Arion Press. Merging literature, theatre, and visual arts this evening of dramatic readings from The Day of the Locust features the six “actors” from her black and white “movie stills”.

CAST:
Lucy Gray - Narrator; Fred Martin - Californian Who Came to Die; Sam Hamm - Harry Greener; Sarah Cabrol - Faye Greener; Jan Halpern - Homer Simpson; Zachary Thomson - Earle Shoop

Members $10; Public $20
CINEMALIT

BARBARA STANWYCK: DARK STAR

SEASON FINALE
Friday, December 6
*Remember the Night* (1940)
DIRECTED BY MITCHELL LEISEN
Barbara Stanwyck, Fred MacMurray

A kind district attorney offers a holiday refuge to a shoplifter in this comic and tenderhearted fable.

JANUARY 2014 PREVIEW
OVER THE TOP: PRE-CODE HOLLYWOOD

Friday, January 10
*Hell’s Angels* (1930)
DIRECTED BY HOWARD HUGHES
Ben Lyon, Jean Harlow

Breathtaking aerial combat sequences and Harlow’s unabashed breakthrough distinguish this World War I spectacle.

Friday, January 17
*Female* (1933)
DIRECTED BY MICHAEL CURTIZ
Ruth Chatterton, George Brent

The no-nonsense CEO of an automobile company gives orders and, ahem, uses her employees just like a man.

*Plus* Surprise Short

Friday, January 24
*Female* (1933)
DIRECTED BY MICHAEL CURTIZ
Ruth Chatterton, George Brent

The no-nonsense CEO of an automobile company gives orders and, ahem, uses her employees just like a man.

*Plus* Surprise Short

Information & registration: 415.393.0100 or milibrary.org/events. All events are held in the 4th floor Meeting Room and require advance registration unless otherwise noted.

FILMS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

HEATHER TERRELL, LIBRARY ASSISTANT

Do you feel all abuzz during the holiday season? If your brain feels too fried to get lost in a good book, Mechanics’ Institute Library’s collection includes DVDs to get you in the spirit and help you unwind. Here are a few of my favorite picks from our collection.

*How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (1966)
The 1966 film version is a classic for good reason. Dr. Seuss’s story of a surly fellow who learns that Christmas is not about what we have, but what we share, reminds us to sit back and forget the frenetic pace of the holidays and enjoy one another.

*Desk Set* (1957)
Corporate downsizing during the holiday season underpins the plot of this romantic comedy starring Katharine Hepburn (my favorite Hepburn) and Spencer Tracy. Bonus: It’s about a group of reference librarians – a must-see if you’re a library geek like me.

*The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)
I can’t resist a film that doubles as both a Halloween and a Christmas story. This is a love story, a masterful musical, and a creepy charmer all in one.

*The City of Lost Children* (1995)
If you liked *Amelie*, you will love *The City of Lost Children*. This is Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s anti-hero Santa archetype in a steampunk universe, before steampunk existed. It’s the story of a man who cannot dream, so kidnaps children to steal theirs.

*Elf* is silly. It makes me guffaw in a very unladylike manner every time I watch it.
BOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS

Our member-only Book Groups select, read, and discuss books of a particular type or genre. Members lead the discussions, new members are always welcome, and registration is not required (unless otherwise specified). Please note that Book Groups are not author events and the authors will not be present during the discussions.

Monday, December 9, Noon
Brown Bag Mystery Readers
Claire DeWitt and the City of the Dead
BY SARA GRAN
PI Claire DeWitt has just arrived in post-Katrina New Orleans to investigate the disappearance of Vic Willing, a prosecutor known for winning convictions in a homicide-plagued city. Has an angry criminal enacted revenge on Vic? Or did he use the storm as a means to disappear?

Wednesday, December 11 & 18, 5:30 pm
The Proust Society of America: San Francisco Chapter
Under the leadership of Dr. Mark Calkins, Mechanics’ Institute offers two bi-weekly discussion groups, on a semester basis. The Proust Group meets from 5:30 – 6:30 pm. From 6:45 – 8:00 pm, the World Literature Group discusses Proustian-inspired works. The new semester began on September 11th, and these groups are now closed to additional registrations. For more information, contact Dr. Calkins at mark@tempsperdu.com or Diane Lai at dlai@milibrary.org. Registration is closed for the semester.

Thursday, December 12, 4:00 – 5:30 pm
California Dreamers
The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America
BY GEORGE PACKER
Silicon Valley used to be a place associated with exciting new developments in computer software, hardware, and the like. Interesting, fun, and hopefully useful. According to Packer and other critics, it is now effectively a global empire, still capable of producing good results, but increasingly vulnerable to careless or bad intentions, if not outright evil, because of the enormous wealth it generates, and the infinite connectivity it promises. (Perhaps the time has come to reverse E. M. Forster’s dictum and say: “Only disconnect.”) Members Only. Registration Required.

Tuesday, December 17, Noon
Fiction You Wish You Had Read
Potpourri of Favorites
Join us for our 5th annual Potpourri of Favorites. Bring in a book (fiction preferred) you have enjoyed, and convince the rest of the group that they will “wish they had read” it, too. You will enjoy hearing others talk about books they enjoyed and learn about some authors that may be new to you. You could find yourself departing with a list of good books for winter reading!
Members Only. Walk-ins Welcome.

Information & registration: Diane Lai at 415.393.0118 or dlai@milibrary.org. All books are available at the 2nd floor Circulation desk. All book discussions are held in the 4th floor Board Room. Register online at milibrary.org/events, select the Book Group Meetings tab and choose the name of the Book Group.
Picturing the News: A Look at the San Francisco Examiner Photographic Negative Collection

Monday, December 2, 4:00 pm
4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

Seven years ago the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley received a gift from the Fang Family of the San Francisco Examiner photographic archive, a rich collection of photographs documenting twentieth century San Francisco and more. Pictorial Processing Archivist Lori Hines will present a slideshow and talk on trends in journalism, culture, and history she observed while sorting, re-housing, and describing the collection of 3.6 million negatives from ca. 1930-2000. Images include San Francisco landmarks, World War II home front, celebrities, bohemian life, disasters and vice. Please note: Some images shown might be considered offensive.

Members Free; Public $15

Twitter Tips & Tricks

Monday, December 16, 2:30 - 3:30 pm
4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

So, you’ve got your Twitter account all set up, and you’ve begun to follow other users and send out a few tweets. What’s next? In this class we will look at sending direct messages, managing lists, mobile notifications and third-party applications. Registration Required. Members Only.

Investment Information on the Web

Thursday, December 19, 10:00 - 11:00 am
4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

Attendees will learn how to access free investment information focused on publicly traded companies and mutual funds, and industry surveys, covering company profiles, corporate developments, earnings prospects, stock rating services and screeners, trading statistics and financial reports. Websites that we explore include Yahoo! Finance, MSN Money, MarketWatch, Google Finance, Bloomberg.com, and Morningstar. Registration Required. Members Only.

Information and registration: 415.393.0102 or milibrary.org/events. Classes are open to Mechanics’ Institute members and guests, and are free. All classes are held in the 3rd floor class rooms and require advance registration unless otherwise noted.

AUTHORS’ CARNIVAL

Picturing the News: A Look at the San Francisco Examiner Photographic Negative Collection

Monday, December 2, 4:00 pm
4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

Writers’ Group Mixer

Thursday, January 9, 6:00 pm
4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

Are you interested in joining a writers’ group or connecting with other MI writers? Come to this networking hour and learn about the writers’ groups that are currently looking for new members and meet other writers who are interested in forming a group. Members Only; Free

Finding a Beta Reader

Tuesday, January 21, 4:00 pm
4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM

Have you written a manuscript? Do you need someone to read it over? Are you interested in helping authors with their raw material? Join us at this informal discussion and networking opportunity. Freelance editor David Colin Carr will discuss the merits of having people read your manuscript before you submit it to a publisher, tell you what to look for in potential readers, what the reader should expect from the writer, and how to manage and get the most out of the relationship. Members Only; Free

Information and registration: milibrary.org/events, or Taryn Edwards at 415.393.0103, or tedwards@milibrary.org.
**News**

**INTERNATIONAL MASTER JOHN DONALDSON, DIRECTOR OF THE CHESS ROOM**

The Mechanics’ Institute entry in the U.S. Chess League has won its division this season and qualified for the playoffs where it will meet arch-rival Los Angeles in the first round. The Mechanics’ were led in the regular season by thirteen-year-old Siddarth Bannik who scored a perfect 4 for 4 on board 4 and 17-year-old Grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky who finished with five wins and a loss playing board 2.

The U.S. Chess League is played over the Internet with each team having four players competing individually with their scores added together. There are 16 teams in the league which has operated since 2005.

The Mechanics’ will be seeking to repeat its previous triumph in 2006.

**Mechanics’ 2006 U.S. Chess League Champions**

Left to Right: IM David Pruess, IM Vinay Bhat, NM Sam Shankland, Daniel Naroditsky, NM Mark Pinto, IM Dmitry Zilberstein, Former World Champion GM Boris Spassky, IM Josh Friedel, IM Vince McCambridge

**Chess for Women**

**Sundays, December 1, 8, 15, 22, 29**  
11:00 am – 1:00 pm  
TAUGHT BY EWELINA KRUBNIK  
FUNDED BY A GIFT IN MEMORY OF R. MARTIN WISKEMANN

**Tournaments**

**Saturday, December 7**  
10:00 am – 8:00 pm  
13th Annual Guthrie McClain Memorial G/45

**Saturday, December 14**  
10:00 am – 4:00 pm  
Children’s Quad

**Tuesday Night Events**

**December 3, 10, 17**  
5:15 pm – 6:15 pm  
LECTURE BY JOHN DONALDSON

6:30 pm – 10:30 pm  
Fall Tuesday Night Marathon

**Wednesday Night Blitz**

**December 4, 11, 18**  
6:30 pm – 8:50 pm  
DIRECTED BY JULES JELINEK

**Saturday Morning Chess Class for Kids**

**December 7, 14, 21, 28**  
10:00 am – 12:00 pm  
TAUGHT BY INTERNATIONAL MASTER ELLIOTT WINSLOW

**Chess Information & reservations:** 415.393.0110 or chessclub.org.
at Centenary College of Louisiana. Drawing upon London’s diaries, those of his “Mate Woman” Charmian, and interviews with friends, lovers, and family, Labor deftly sorts through the myths and painful truths of London’s meteoric life with an easy to read (almost novelistic at times) approach.

As a child, London was dreadfully poor and obliged to work numerous odd jobs to make money for his family including stints as paper boy, cannery employee, Klondike gold prospector and oyster pirate. I was shocked to read how young he was during all these daring adventures — still in his teens for the most part. While my great grandfather was working safely as a dry goods salesman, London was fearlessly jumping trains, fighting hobos, and drinking his pals under the table, all while writing, writing, writing.

Labor pays a great deal of attention to London’s reading and writing habits — providing useful tips to the aspiring author though few can hope to match London’s prodigious output. A life-long voracious reader, word collector, and disciplined writer, London churned out 1000 words a day, even when under extreme physical duress such as the time he contracted an exotic illness that caused his hands to swell to twice their normal size.

For London, reading was his life-line and his way out of the depressing circumstances of his youth. When he discovered the glories of the Oakland Public Library he recalled that he “read mornings, afternoons, and nights. I read in bed, I read at the table, I read as I walked to and from school, and I read at recess while the other boys were playing.” Years later, in a letter to Ina Coolbrith, librarian at the Oakland Public Library, California’s first poet laureate, and later librarian of the Mercantile Association (with whom the Mechanics’ Institute merged in 1906) he wrote, “I was an eager, thirsty, hungry little kid — and one day, at the library, I drew out a volume on Pizarro of Peru….you praised me for reading books of that nature. Proud! If you only knew how proud your words made me...You were a goddess to me.”

Prior to reading this book I had assumed, through my childhood readings of London’s “dog books” (Call of the Wild and White Fang) and having grown up around his old stomping grounds (what Oaklander doesn’t adore London’s Klondike shack outside of the First and Last Chance saloon) that London was merely “a rough, savage fellow...who likes prizefights and brutalities, [and] who has a clever turn of the pen.” I was amazed to find that though indeed a man’s man, London had a tender heart and an active, often mercurial mind. Those qualities, paired with his dreamy blue eyes and taste for adventure made him indeed swoon-worthy both physically and literarily.

This biography was a labor of love for the author as he spent over forty years amassing his research. I would say he has done a masterful job at resurrecting the amazing character of Jack London, bringing to life the turbulent times in which he lived and focusing attention on the breadth of London’s work. London wrote of adventure, love, nobility, and “big living” and thus deserves his place in the pantheon of California writers. I, after reading this book, certainly will read more of him.

Jack London, at least for a time, haunted the Library of the Mechanics’ Institute though Librarian Mary O. Carmody claimed “he was inclined to be a bit careless about returning books”. Despite that questionable borrowing record, we are proud to have an impressive collection of materials about and by Jack London. Try an author search in our catalog to see what we have or go straight to the “L’s” in the 2nd floor Fiction section.

Members’ Meeting
Thursday, December 5
5:30 pm Reception and Refreshments; 6:00 pm Meeting
4TH FLOOR MEETING ROOM
Free to Members & Guests

Agenda
General News of the Institute
Join us for delicious refreshments and camaraderie as we welcome our new Library Director Deb Hunt and hear from the staff on what’s new and coming up at the Mechanics’ Institute. Bring your comments and questions.

Special Vote to Amend Articles of Incorporation
When we filed our Articles of Incorporation with the State of California back in 1905, it stated that the Board of Trustees shall consist of 14 members. The Board would like to have the flexibility to increase the number of its members.

We therefore will ask you to vote on the following resolution at the Members’ Meeting on December 5, 2013:

Be it resolved that the portion of Paragraph 1 of the 5th Article of the Articles of Incorporation of Mechanics’ Institute that presently reads “5th. That the number of its Trustees shall be fourteen” shall be amended to read: “5th. That the number of its Trustees shall be fixed by, or in the manner provided in, the Bylaws.”
HOLIDAY BOOK & POSTER SALE

Wednesday, December 4
11:00 am - 4:00 pm
4th Floor Meeting Room

Holiday shoppers—come and select the perfect gifts for friends, family, colleagues or significant others! A delightful and diverse selection of hard-covers, paperbacks, book art, and posters will be available for purchase.

The café will be open for refreshments. Free to all.

Your purchases benefit the Library and the Events Department.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY GATHERING

Thursday, December 12, 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm
2nd Floor Library

Join members and friends for some holiday cheer and lively conversation while relaxing to musical interludes. Enjoy gourmet cheeses and hors d’oeuvres, delectable desserts and tempting libations!

Admission $10 – Open to Members & Guests

ADVANCE RESERVATIONS REQUIRED
Call 415.393.0100 or online milibrary.org/events